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## Review of *The Real Roadrunner* by Martha Anne Maxon

Janice M. Hughes

*Department of Biology, Lakehead University*

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**The Real Roadrunner.** By Martha Anne Maxon. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005. xiv + 124 pp. Color plates, figures, tables, bibliography, index. \$39.95 cloth.

This lively little book is the ninth installment in the Animal Natural History Series published by University of Oklahoma Press. Its author, Martha Maxon, has aptly chosen to reveal the true nature of the greater roadrunner, a veritable icon of southwestern bird life. Perhaps no one is better able to accomplish this: Maxon arguably possesses greater intimate knowledge of roadrunners' private lives than any other ornithologist.

The book comprises nine chapters that describe comprehensively such topics as systematics, geographic distribution and demographics, ecology, adaptive physiology, folklore, and behavior; however, it is in the last of these that the author's experience truly shines. During her doctoral work, Maxon studied the ethological aspects of roadrunner courtship and reproduction. Moreover, her nonintrusive experimental methods allowed her to observe the birds without overly influencing their activities. Accordingly, her firsthand descriptions of rarely seen roadrunner behavior—including their elaborate prenuptial “dances”—are both charming and enlightening. A multitude of calls are also well documented, with great emphasis on their context and purpose. Dozens of detailed pen-and-ink illustrations provide excellent reference to visual and vocal displays. Also included are 24 interesting color plates.

Furthermore, *The Real Roadrunner* offers extensive discussion of early chick development, including anatomy, growth, feather molt, and behavior. Parental care through incubation, nestling, and fledgling periods is also described in detail. Here, Maxon's field observations have been augmented by study of captive roadrunners that the author raised in accordance with her graduate work. She provides previously unpublished records of daily observations from hatching to first autumn, about 90 days hence. Although some entries are brief, they nonetheless impart a considerable amount of novel information. Most of us know roadrunners only from a few fleeting glances; Maxon literally lived with these birds.

The book ends with a discussion of the significance of the species in the folklore of First Nations and Mexican societies. The roadrunner's importance as a spiritual entity among countless diverse cultures is particularly engaging. Given our own fascination with the *corre camino*, it is no wonder that this mystifying bird has touched so many peoples throughout history.

Perhaps the only shortfall of *The Real Roadrunner* is its price. The book is certainly not lacking in information—being undoubtedly the most comprehensive discussion of an often enigmatic bird. Its small font size and overall compact format (trim size 7.25" x 10.25") may be bothersome to some purchasers, however. These factors aside, *The Real Roadrunner* is an important contribution to the literature of this species. Moreover, anyone who has chased a roadrunner down a dusty trail, or merely longs to do so, will most certainly enjoy it. **Janice M. Hughes**, *Department of Biology, Lakehead University*.

**Laws and Societies in the Canadian Prairie West, 1670-1940.** Edited by Louis A. Knafla and Jonathan Swainger. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005. vi + 344 pp. Maps, photographs, figures, notes, subject index, index of cases, index of ordinances, proclamations, and statutes. \$85.00 cloth, \$34.95 paper.

For all intents and purposes, the settlement of the Canadian prairie was the founding of a new society using materials brought to the new land along with those close at hand. Of course, preexisting aboriginal society had to be supplanted in the course of this founding. In both the supplanting and the founding, the rule of law as we currently know it was a principal means and end of the settlement process.

The essays in this collection explore many dimensions of this founding. In the early period, British policy steered an awkward route among economic extraction, settlement, and coexistence with aboriginal peoples. The various objectives did not cohere. Essays by Sidney Harring and Russell Smandych suggest that Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) authorities oscillated between applying British imperial law to the inhabitants and recognizing local customs governing dispute settlement. While the treaty process bespoke relations between sovereign equals, in fact these were instruments—often fraudulently entered and double-mindedly enforced—for gaining the “legal” right to continue with the extraction of the region's economic potential.

The gap between law and its enforcement figures in several essays. Those by Hamar Foster and by Zhiqiu Lin and Augustine Brannigan explore how much discretion local officials possessed to apply British common law principles, depart from them, enforce the law, refuse to do so, and opt for cajoling and persuasion versus strict application of the law's letter.